

The Great Tidepool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



WHEN I'M 64

Last month marked the 64th edition of Pacific Grove's annual spring tradition—the Good Old Days Festival. As I strolled through the festivities, I thought to myself: *I hope I'm this vibrant when I'm 64.*



Wandering the rows of booths and vendors, I wondered what it was that drew so many visitors to Lighthouse Avenue on the first Saturday and Sunday in May. The answer, I realized, was as varied as the hundreds and hundreds of faces that were passing me by.



For many locals, our favorite part is the parade along Pine Avenue that launches the event—a procession of classic cars, Little Leaguers, scout troops, youth ambassadors, tap dancers, a martial arts club, a marching band, even a gaggle of goats herded by a border collie. It is a small-town parade in all its glory—lovingly local.



But I also found Good Old Days to be gastronomically global. Sure, there's the go-to carnival sustenance—cotton candy and kettle corn, beef jerky and bacon-wrapped hot dogs, sweet corn and shaved ice. But a stroll through Good Old Days is also an excursion past the savory scent of chow mein and chicken tikka masala, tri-tip and tamales, catfish and carnitas, baklava and shawarma and Salvadorean pupusa loca.



Surely, many families came for the kid-friendly carnival atmosphere, including rides with names like Fun Slide and Bounty Pirate Ship and Wrecking Ball. You could paint your face, tie-dye a T-shirt, pinball around a bounce house, cuddle with a bunny at a petting zoo, and compete in a Firefighters Challenge. Is there anything more adorable than a five-year-old festooned in full firefighting regalia? For adults, how about more than 55 musical performances at six staging areas, a couple of them featuring wine and beer gardens, thanks to the PG Rotary Club. On Sunday, there was even a flash mob, adding a new wrinkle to Good Old Days.



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Then there are the vendors, as if a small merchant city sprouted up overnight. I counted nearly 200 booths, although I may have been thrown off count by the occasional chat with a neighbor... or banana cream crepe sighting. I spotted crafts for sale made out of coconut wax, crystals, redwood, driftwood, pebbles and Scrabble tiles. People perused booths touting olive oil, lavender soaps, pop-up greeting cards, dream catchers, mosaic yard art, walking sticks, whirly-gigs, wind chimes up-cycled out of silverware, and cedar serving trays made to look like miniature surfboards.



And, of course, no PG event would be complete without a celebration of home. So I found myself chatting most with the denizens of booths touting regional organizations (California State Parks, Central Coast Writers, KMBY), local entities (the PG Heritage Society and Art Center and Police Department), small business with big dreams (from Peace of Mind Dog Rescue to Coleman Family Chiropractic), even a lovely woman named Jenna Garzaniti presenting her first published book to her fellow Pagrovians.



In the end, I had a bit of an epiphany. For years, I figured "Good Old Days" meant harkening back to a innocent vibe, a yesteryear experience. But I don't think it's about the "Old." It's mostly about a really Good Day.



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